



# ***JBVA TODAY!***

*A weekly newsletter from the Jesse Brown VAMC, Chicago, IL*

*October 17, 2005*



## **CFC Kicks Off This Week**

In the 44 years since former President John F. Kennedy signed an Executive Order leading to the establishment of the Combined Federal Campaign, the CFC has raised over \$1 billion to assist charitable organizations throughout the world.

This year, JBVAMC has established a goal of \$55,000 for its CFC campaign. Our Agency Campaign Coordinators – **Kimberly Barnes**, Director's Office and **Retta Turner**, Anesthesiology Service – would like to invite all of our staff to attend one of the following CFC kick-off celebrations, featuring refreshments, entertainment and representation from several of the charities that receive CFC funding.

- **Monday, October 17 from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. in the JBVA Auditorium**
- **Tuesday, October 18 from 12 noon to 3 p.m. in the Lakeside CBOC auditorium**
- **Tuesday, October 25 from 1 to 3 p.m. at the Crown Point CBOC**



After eight months serving as Acting Director for JBVAMC, **Stan Johnson** is heading back to the Tomah VAMC. Above, while holding a photo of the JBVA campus signed by staff during his farewell luncheon on October 13, he is joined by (others, from left): Dr. **Warren Wallace**, Chief of Staff; **Michelle Blakely**, Associate Director; **Paula Steward**, Associate Director for Patient Care; and **Jason Petti**, Assistant Director. Ms. Blakely will serve as Acting Director for JBVAMC until a permanent Medical Center Director is appointed.

## A Bit of History – From one of our “Veterans Serving Veterans”

*The Jesse Brown VAMC kicks off its “Affirming the Commitment” initiative on Thursday, November 10 at 10:30 a.m. in the JBVA auditorium. We are using this opportunity to ask some of our own staff who are veterans to tell us about their military experiences. Today’s memories are told by **Raul Ramos**, Engineering Service, who is a veteran of the United States Marine Corps.*



It was 1958, and the United States was in direct support of Taiwan. General Chiang Kai-chek had evacuated communist China almost 10 years earlier for Taiwan, and allied with the Americans. The Chinese Communist Party led by Mao Tse-tung was beginning an invasion of Taiwan, and planned to use the Island of Quemoy as a jump off point. They had been intermittently shelling Quemoy.

The “1<sup>st</sup> 8-inch Guns” Unit, which was attached to the 12<sup>th</sup> Marine Regiment as part of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Marine Division, was ordered to train the Taiwanese Army in the use of these weapons. The CO of the “8-inch Guns” was Major Cass, and the Commander of the 12<sup>th</sup> Marine Regiment was Colonel Shoup, whom later became Commandant of the Marine Corps. The Regiment went in at night, put the guns in place and began firing on Mainland China. The shelling was so successful – hitting fuel and ammunition depots – that the PRC stopped the shelling and invasion. General Chiang Kai-chek personally decorated our outfit.

**Look for the picture of this outstanding unit on the “Veterans Serving Veterans” picture boards during the Affirming the Commitment ceremony on Thursday, Nov. 10<sup>th</sup> from 10:30 a.m. to 12 noon in the JBVA auditorium. It will also be broadcast via pic-tel to Lakeside and Crown Point Clinics.**

**Employees who wish to submit similar accounts or photos of their military experiences should contact Lisa Murphy at extension 57896.**

## JBVA Represented at National Creative Arts Fest in Denver

Three JBVA veterans will join over 100 veterans from across the country who will receive gold medals at the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival in Denver this week.

The Creative Arts Festival, hosted by VA, the American Legion Auxiliary and Help Hospitalized Veterans, is the culmination of a year-long fine arts talent competition involving 3,000 participants nationwide. The festival is open to all veterans receiving care at VA medical facilities.

JBVA veterans Donna Pierce and Michael Benton have been named as Gold Medal recipients in the Vocal Group Pop category, for their musical selection *Where is the Love*. Veteran Frank Mascenic has been named a Gold Medal recipient in the Pastels category of the Visual Arts competition.

Mr. Mascenic will be featured and Ms. Pierce and Mr. Benton will perform on Sunday afternoon at an art exhibit and variety stage show at the Newman Center for the Performing Arts on the University of Denver campus that will be attended by VA Secretary R. James Nicholson.

Following is a list of other JBVAMC veterans who are gold, silver or bronze medal recipients for this year's national competition:

<u>Recipient</u>	<u>Medal</u>	<u>Category</u>	<u>Title</u>
<b>Michael Wilburn</b> (EMS) & Renee Washington	Gold	Group Structured Ballroom	<i>Dance With My Father</i>
Jesse Brown Chorus	Silver	Vocal Group Broadway	<i>Aquarius Medley</i>
Ernest Maxey	Bronze	Vocal Solo Classical	<i>Panis Angelicus</i>
Elmer Head	Bronze	Visual Arts – Collage	<i>Incredibulls</i>

***Congratulations to All!***

## Mark Your Calendar

**November 1** – Blood Drive from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. in the JBVA Auditorium.

**November 2** – Town Hall Meeting with James Roseborough, Network Director for VISN 12. To be held in the JBVA auditorium (with pic-tel to the Lakeside and Crown Point CBOCs). The town hall is tentatively scheduled to be held in the afternoon, although an exact time has not yet been determined.

**November 10** – “Affirming the Commitment” Ceremony at 10:30 a.m. in the JBVA auditorium, with pic-tel to the Lakeside and Crown Point CBOCs.

**November 10** – Winter Stand Down for Homeless Veterans from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. in the National Guard Armory, 1551 N. Kedzie Avenue.

## *After Katrina*

### JBVA Staff Provide Assistance to Hurricane Victims

*A number of staff at the Jesse Brown VA Medical Center have been deployed to the Gulf Coast states or volunteered at the FEMA Call Center in Chicago to assist victims of Hurricane Katrina. In this, the first of a series of reports from our staff, Dr. **Janet Kamer**, Mental Health Service Line, tells about her experiences while deployed to Biloxi, Mississippi.*

Biloxi's damage is just as severe as New Orleans. Approximately 30-40% of the population became homeless and there are 285 recorded deaths so far. The homes sustained severe damage due to the 150 mph winds, embedded tornadoes and 30-foot wave surges from the Gulf of Mexico. People were swept into the Gulf of Mexico from the second and third floors of their homes, and many are still missing and presumed dead.

Biloxi residents refer to Katrina as "our tsunami". This city looks like a war zone. I will bring back photos to share with the medical center. When I was in Hattiesburg, MS three weeks ago I thought the destruction was very bad. The devastation in Biloxi is much worse and almost surreal. The VA Hospital in nearby Gulfport was completely destroyed and eventually will be leveled -- there are no plans to rebuild it. Staff members fear there are still bodies under the rubble from the apartment complex next door. Due to the massive size of the collapsed buildings, they are unable to get to them. Fortunately, all the patients and staff were evacuated from Gulfport before Katrina hit.

All of the employees from the Gulfport VA are now working at the Biloxi VA and everybody is pretty burned out. At least a third of the psychology department staff lost their homes, too. One psychology staff member went to Gulfport to retrieve what he could of years of research and patient files, and has all his stuff laid out to dry on one of the floors in the psych department. Two psychology interns at Gulfport lost their apartments and one completely lost all the data from her dissertation. The job of the crisis team that I am on (myself, a psychiatrist and two social workers) is to relieve the on-site Mental Health Service Line staff and counsel the employees. Everybody from psychology was really glad that we were here and took a long, four-day weekend to start rebuilding their own homes.

On a positive note, this city is also coming back to life under our eyes. Every day, it looks more cleaned up -- with a small army of construction and clean-up crews and church-based volunteers removing the rubble and downed trees. Employees want to talk and are eager for positive coping strategies. Getting staff together in groups has been helpful for them; to share their experiences with each other and give each other both practical and emotional support. I am glad that I can help.

-- **Janet Kamer**, Ph.D.



**Would you like to receive this newsletter every Monday? It is sent automatically to all JBVAMC employees with MS Outlook/Exchange, but anyone with an e-mail address can also subscribe for delivery to their personal computer. Just visit the VISN 12 internet web site at [www.visn12.med.va.gov](http://www.visn12.med.va.gov) to subscribe. Employees can also access the “VISN 12” link on the JBVAMC web page, click on “Employee Resources” and scroll down to “subscriptions” to register for the newsletter.**



To commemorate National White Cane Safety Awareness Day, veterans served by the Visual Impairment Services Team (VIST) set up a table in the atrium on October 14 to distribute literature on eye disease and talk about their adjustment to blindness. From left, **Lynne O'Donnell**, NP stops by to chat with **Sheila Sims**, VIST Coordinator, and veterans Joe Haag and Erwin Linkman.

*JBVA Today* is published weekly for the employees, patients, volunteers and friends of the Jesse Brown VA Medical Center. Articles of interest are welcome and should be submitted to the JBVAMC Office of Public Affairs (Mail Point 00PR) or by e-mail to [raymond.leber@med.va.gov](mailto:raymond.leber@med.va.gov) or by calling (312) 569-6402 or extension 56402.

The editor reserves the right to use and edit contributed articles. Submission deadline is the Wednesday prior to the week of publication.

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